

business for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with Republicans controlling the time from 11:30 to 12:30 for the purpose of a colloquy and the Democrats controlling the time from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

NEED FOR SERIOUS FISCAL ACTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, all across the country this morning, Americans are struggling—and they are not getting much in the way of help or hope from Washington. Those who are unemployed or eager to hire are frustrated by the mountain of burdensome new rules and regulations Democrats have imposed on them in the past 2 years and by the uncertainty that comes with every proposal to create another one. They are shocked that a White House which does not even try to balance its checkbook would repeatedly propose to raise taxes. And more and more, they are worried about the consequences of our debt and the President's reluctance to do anything about it.

But even more upsetting to many Americans is the repeated attempts of the White House to seem as if it is doing something about these things when it is not. That is just what the President has sought to do in talking about the need to reform entitlements and lower the debt, but refusing to lift a finger to do either. And that is just what I fear he will do again this afternoon in outlining his vision for tackling these problems without so much as presenting a single new idea or anything approaching a workable plan to get us there.

The truth is, the President is only entering this debate at all because he can no longer ignore the growing bipartisan calls for action. If he were serious, he would be talking about a detailed roadmap for action, not just grabbing headlines by announcing another speech.

Of course, we can hope that the President presents more than just his vision for the future this afternoon. But those who have hoped for that from this President have been disappointed many times before. What we are likely to get instead is a broad-

brush notion of what the President wants to see—a vision that includes calls for strengthening entitlement programs that few people would disagree with but which will never come about absent Presidential leadership; a partisan call for tax hikes on struggling job creators, and, I fear, a call for tax hikes on energy producers when gas prices are already creating heavy burdens for so many.

No doubt we will also get a fair share of finger-pointing and an attempt to cast Republicans in the worst possible light for actually laying out a serious plan to address the crises we face while others merely talk about their vision. But we can still hope that the President leaves the scapegoating aside for a change and finally admits the obvious: that we can only solve these fiscal crises if we do so together.

So either the President agrees today that Republicans have a point when it comes to the seriousness of our fiscal problems and admits that the old approach of pretending they do not exist will not work anymore or those problems will become harder and harder to solve. Either he pretends that old programs, unlike everything else in life, do not need to adapt to survive or he joins us in acknowledging those programs will no longer be there for the people who are counting on them if we do not take serious action now.

We need to keep our promises to seniors and to a rising generation of Americans—and we will—but we can no longer afford to make promises to younger workers that we all know we cannot afford to keep.

Look: if big government created jobs and opportunity, then we would be in the middle of a boom right now. That experiment has failed. And that is why the national conversation has shifted from how much Democrats want to expand the scope of government to how much both parties should rein it in.

The fiscal crisis we face will not be solved by “freezing” unsustainable government spending or by raising taxes on the very small businesses we are counting on to create jobs. And the programs we cherish as Americans will not be preserved for the next generation through speeches alone. Americans do not want to hear the President's vision today—he has had 2 years to lay that out. They want to hear his plan.

Americans do not want to hear the President criticize or distort the serious efforts of those in our party who want to solve our problems head on. They want to hear a detailed counterproposal of his own. And they do not want to hear that the price of gas at the pump is going to get even higher, or that their opportunities to find or create jobs will shrink. Now is not a time for mere speeches or political attacks. It is a time for action.

That is what Americans want from this President. That is what they are failing to get. I hope that changes today.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COONS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOLUNTARISM

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I rise to mark National Volunteer Week and Delaware Volunteer Week. All week long throughout the Nation and across the great State of Delaware, Americans and Delawareans will be engaged in volunteer service. Volunteer opportunities include helping the homeless, tending to the environment, mentoring children in schools, and working to keep communities safer and stronger and free from fires and accidents and injuries, among many others.

Here in the Senate one can't talk about community service or national service or voluntarism without thanking and recognizing our colleague Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI from Delaware's neighboring State of Maryland. Senator MIKULSKI has been the leader on voluntarism for many years, most of them alongside the late Senator Ted Kennedy. I am proud to be working with her to fight to save our national service programs.

When Delaware's tireless Governor Jack Markell was sworn into office in 2009, he decided to forgo the traditional Governor's inaugural ball and he, along with his wonderful wife, our first lady Carla Markell, instead organized a week of service projects across the State. Today that week of service continues and has become a tremendous opportunity for nonprofit organizations and community service organizations across the State to connect with Delawareans excited about teaching our children the value of voluntarism, connecting with neighbors and helping improve and strengthen our communities.

I have long believed that those who engage in voluntarism and service to others in fact get more out of it than they put in.

Voluntarism, as you know, Madam President, is a fundamental part of what it means to be American. It is a great—some would say the greatest—part of America and its cultural traditions. However, voluntarism need not be confined to my State or this week. It is something from which every American can benefit at every stage in their life.

In my view, one of the most effective voluntarism efforts in modern history is one with which I was first engaged when I was a resident briefly of the State of the Acting President pro tempore when I was working for the national “I Have a Dream” Foundation in New York City now many years ago.